

Message Text

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CHIANG MAI 0047 DATED 230718Z FEB 76 SENT ACTION BANGKOK
INFO SONGKHLA AND UDORN BEING REPEATED TO YOU FOR YOUR
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QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L CHIANG MAI 047

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, TH

SUBJECT: ELECTION '76 -- THE NORTH

BANGKOK PASS SONGKHLA

1. SUMMARY -- PRELIMINARY REACTIONS TO KNOWN LIST OF CANDIDATES
IN NORTH ARE THAT MORE ARE RUNNING THIS YEAR; THAI NATION AND
SAP ARE BOTH RUNNING LENGTHY, OPPOSING SLATES EVIDENTLY PAYING
NO ATTENTION TO ALLEGED AGREEMENT TO COOPERATE; NEW FORCE HAS
THIS TIME FIELDDED MORE CANDIDATES WHO LOOK AS IF THEY WILL PUT
ON AN AGGRESSIVE CAMPAIGN; AND ONE OF MORE INTERESTING CONTESTS
IS SHAPING UP IN MAE HONG SON WHERE THAWI IS TRYING TO BUY
EVERYONE IN SIGHT. END SUMMARY.

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2. CONSULATE EMPLOYEE IS PRESENTLY ON THE ROAD COLLECTING FINAL LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR APRIL ELECTION WHICH WILL BE GIVEN TO POL AT FSL MEETING FEB. 27. PRELIMINARY REACTION BASED ON WHAT WE ABLE TO LEARN FROM PRESS AND OTHER SOURCES IS, HOWEVER, THAT THIS YEAR THERE WILL BE MORE CANDIDATES RUNNING IN THE NORTH THAN THERE WERE IN 1975. NEW FORCE PARTY IN PARTICULAR HAS FIELDDED STRONGER TICKET, AND PEOPLE'S POWER PARTY (PALANG PRACHACHON) WHICH BILLS ITSELF AS CONSERVATIVES' ANSWER TO NEW FORCE, IS RUNNING CANDIDATES IN 12 OF 14 PROVINCES IN CONSULAR DISTRICT. (NOTE: PALANG PRACHACHON UNDER ITS NEW LEADERSHIP IS SAID TO HAVE NAWAPHON BACKING. CANDIDATES ARE REPORTEDLY YOUNG AND INCLUDE SEVERAL MILITARY OFFICERS OF CAPTAIN AND MAJOR RANK WHO HAVE RESIGNED FROM MILITARY TO RUN.)

3. THAI NATION AND SAP APPEAR TO BE TAKING LITTLE NOTE OF ANY AGREEMENTS IN BANGKOK THAT THEIR CANDIDATES COOPERATE RATHER THAN COMPETE. THAI NATION CANDIDATE IN PHRAE TOLD CONOFF THAT AGREEMENT APPLIED ONLY TO PARTY BIGWIGS IN BANGKOK, NOT TO THOSE RUNNING UPCOUNTRY. IT APPEARS THAT THAI NATION IS COMPETING FOR NEARLY EVERY AVAILABLE SEAT (IN DISTRICT 3, CHIANG MAI IT IS EVEN RUNNING THREE CANDIDATES FOR TWO SEATS) AND HAS STRENGTHENED SLATE WITH DEFECTORS FROM OTHER PARTIES INCLUDING THREE EX-MP'S (PREVIOUSLY SOCIAL NATIONALIST AND PEACEFUL PEOPLE). AMONG EX-MP'S, HOWEVER, SAP HAS DONE THE BEST IN PICKING UP DEFECTORS, CLAIMING FIVE AMONG THE 14 WHO HAVE CHANGED PARTIES. ALL BUT TWO (INSON BUAKHIEO, SPT, CHIANG MAI AND DUSIT PHANITCHAPHAT, SAP, LAMPANG) OF THE 49 EX-MP'S ARE RUNNING AGAIN. IN ADDITION TO DUSIT, SAP "LOST" LAMPHUN'S SAMAN CHOMPHUTHEP WHO WAS KICKED OUT OF PARTY OVER CHARGES OF MISREPRESENTING HIMSELF DURING LAST ELECTION: SAMAN HAS VOWED TO RUN AGAIN, BUT WE ARE PRESENTLY UNCERTAIN WHICH PARTY HAS ACCEPTED HIM.

4. SOCIALIST PARTY OF THAILAND HAS NOT THIS YEAR FIELDDED CANDIDATES IN CHIANG MAI BUT IS FOR FIRST TIME RUNNING IN PHRAE. AVOIDANCE OF CHIANG MAI IS PROBABLY DUE TO DISMAL FAILURE OF BUNSANONG DURING LAST SUMMER'S BY-ELECTION AND OUTSTWNING GUN-RUNNING CHARGES AGAINST

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EX-MP INSON BUAKHIEO. IT WOULD TAKE MAJOR EFFORT TO AROUSE SUFFICIENT SYMPATHY TO WOO VOTERS TO SPT, AND PARTY HAS EVIDENTLY DECIDED NOT TO BOTHER.

5. CAMPAIGNING HAS ALREADY STARTED ALTHOUGH POSTERS ARE AS YET SCARCE. AT RALLY IN CHIANG MAI'S FANG DISTRICT LAST WEEK, SAP CANDIDATES ACCUSED NEW FORCE OF BEING COMMUNIST AND HAVING RECEIVED MONEY FROM KGB. PLOY

DIDN'T WORK AS CROWD TURNED UGLY AND SAP CANDIDATES WERE FORCED TO FLEE THE SCENE. NEW FORCE CANDIDATES LOOK AS IF THEY WILL PROVE AGGRESSIVE CAMPAIGNERS: TWO WERE RECENTLY OBSERVED BLASTING THEIR PROPAGANDA FROM PARKED SOUND TRUCK AT STARTLED FARMERS IN FIELDS ALONG LAMPHUN ROAD. RUNNING WITH NEW FORCE IN CHIANG MAI ARE SEVERAL PROFESSORS FROM CM UNIV. PROFESSORS ARE KNOWN TO BE ANTI-AMERICAN, BUT WE HAVE NOT YET HEARD OF THEIR INCLUDING VIEWS ABOUT THE U.S. IN THEIR CAMPAIGNING. PM KHUKRIT IS EXPECTED TO VISIT CHIANG MAI FEB 26TH AND DEPUTY PM PRAMAN IS SCHEDULED FOR THE FIRST WEEK IN MARCH TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR THEIR PARTIES' CANDIDATES.

6. ONE OF MORE INTERSTINGHCONTESTS IN NORTH IS FOR MAE HONG SON'S SINGLE SEAT WHERE AMONG THE CANDIDATES RET. AIR CHIEF MARSHAL THAWI CHUNLASAP, SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY LEADER AND RECIPIENT OF NO. 1 PLACE ON BALLOT, IS A PRIME CONTENDER.H THAWAI HAS MORE MONEY FOR CAMPAIGNING THAN OTHER CANDIDATES PLUS A STRONG LOCAL ORGANIZATION. AS CANVASSERS, HE HAS HIRED UNSUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES FROM LAST YEAR'S ELECTION, A STRATEGY WHICH PRESUMABLY NOT ONLY BUYS OFF POSSIBLE OPPOSITION CANDIDATES, BUT ALSO DELIVERS AT LEAST SOME OF THEIR FOLLOWING TO THAWI. THAWI HAS ALREADY TAKEN PUBLIC CREDIT FOR HIS ROLE AS ADVISOR TO SUPREME COMMAND'S MOBLE DEVELOPMENT UNIT PROJECTS, AND AN MDU TEAM WLL REPORTEDLY MOVE INTO MAE HONG SON BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF MARCH TO CONDUCT SURVEYS FOR NEW PROJECTS. ALSO, ACCORDING TO MAE SARIANG DEPUTY DISTRICT OFFICER, ABOUT 800 LUMBER WORKERS HAVE RECENTLY MOVED INTO THE PROVINCE AND REGISTERED AS VOTERS. SOME WORK FOR COMPANY BELONGING TO NIKON JANTARAWIRAT (TIMBER MERCHANT AND SAP CANDIDATE), OTHERS FOR SAYOM RAMASAN (A CANVASSER FOR THAWI) AND STILL OTHERS FOR SALWEEN CO. IN CONFIDENTIAL

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WHICH THAWI HAS AN INTEREST. WORKERS ARE EXPECTED TO LEAVE PROVINCE AFTER CASTING BALLOTS FOR THEIR BOSSES' CHOSEN CANDIDATES. DESPITE HIS VARIOUS PLOXU, THAWI FACES RESENTMENT AMONG SOME VOTERS WHO SEE HIM AS MERELY USING MAE HONG SON FOR HIS OWN ENDS; HIS CONNECTIONS WITH THAT PROVINCE ARE TENUOUS AND INCLUDE ONLY HIS BUSINESS INTERESTS AND HIS WIFE'S BIRTH IN THE PROVINCE'S KHUN YUAM DISTRICT. AMONG EIGHT OTHER CANDIDATES, ONLY ONE KAREN, BUNLOET SAWANGKUN, IS RUNNING. HE MAY HAVE BETTER CHANCE THAN LAST TIME WHEN HE AND ANOTHER KAREN SPLIT ETHNIC VOTE, BUT KARENS DESPITE THEIR SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS IN MAE HONG SON, HAVE PROVEN IN PAST TO SHOW A DEFINITE LACK OF POLITICAL AWARENESS AND A POOR TURN-OUT ON ELECTION DAY. NOT TO BE IGNORED IS NARINDON RATANAPAIKUN, NEW FORCE MP IN DISSOLVED PARLIAMENT,

WHO REPORTEDLY RETAINS FOLLOWING AMONG FELLOW SCHOOL-
TEACHERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE; HE PROMISES VIGOROUS FIGHT.

HARBIN

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